Forming Research Questions

Purpose

Students will form historical research questions and seek responses by analyzing primary resources, such as autobiographies, diaries, maps, photographs, letters, and government documents, and secondary resources, such as biographies and other nonfiction books and articles on the history of the United States.

Materials

For each student: copy of Black Line Master (BLM) *Historical Research Guide*
For the class: access to a variety of information resources (e.g., textbooks, encyclopedias, the Internet)

Activity

A. Questions and Answers

1. Explain to students that historical research is what historians use to answer questions about the past and to write the history books that they use today.
2. Explain to students that historical research starts with a historical question, which can be broad, precise, or somewhere in between. Give an example of a broad question (e.g., "What was George Washington like?"), and an example of a precise question (e.g., "What was George Washington's relationship with his vice president, John Adams, like?") Explain that forming a question makes research more efficient.
3. Remind students of the difference between primary resources and secondary resources. Have students name several examples of each and write students' suggestions on the chalkboard.
4. Explain to students that good research uses many different types of resources, both primary and secondary, and looks at questions and issues from more than one perspective.

B. Forming Historical Questions

1. Pass out the BLMs *Historical Research Guide*.
2. Review the directions on the BLM with students and answer any questions.
3. Guide students to think about historical subjects that interest them. Suggest that students consider subject matter from recent units in class.
4. Make sure all students have formed a viable research question.

Technology Literacy Standards

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
1	X	X	X	X		X	X
2	X	X	X			X	X
3	X		X			X	X
4		X				X	X
5						X	X
6		X		X		X	
7						X	
8						X	
9						X	
10						X	
11				X		X	
12						X	
13				X			
14							
15				X			
16							

X = This Technology Literacy Standard is addressed in this lesson.

☐ = This Technology Literacy Standard is not addressed in this lesson.

5. Determine a due date for students' research. On the due date, have students present their summaries to the class.

Questions for Review

Basic Concepts and Processes

After students have presented their summaries to the class, ask them questions such as the following:

Why is it important to form a research question before starting your research?

What things should you consider while you are forming your question?

What information resource was the most helpful in your research? The least helpful?

Would this be true with a different research question? Why or why not?

Name:_____

Historical Research Guide

What is your historical question? _____
_____

What information do you expect to find during your research?_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What information resource(s) will you use first to find the answer to your question?

_____

List at least two primary resources that you used to research your question:

1. _____
2. _____

List at least four secondary resources that you used to research your question:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

When you have completed your research, write a two-page summary of your findings.
Be sure to proofread and edit your summary and to include proper citations for all the
resources you used.

Historical Research Guide

Teacher Directions

Pass out the BLMs *Historical Research Guide*. Review the directions on the BLM with students and answer any questions. Guide students to think about historical subjects that interest them. Suggest that students consider subject matter from recent units in class.

Make sure all students have come up with a viable research question. Determine a due date for students' research. On the due date, have students present their summaries to the class.

Answer Key

Students' answers will vary depending on their research topic and method.